

TELL ME SOMETHIN' GOOD! ... ABOUT SERVING OTHERS

In the August edition of *Everyday Leadership*, readers were asked to share their story about moving from success to significance. Below is an article we'd like to share (with permission of the author):

A Step Up the Ladder of Significance By Dawn M. White



Some people take one giant step from success to significance, for various reasons and circumstances. For me it was a gradual decline down the ladder of success and up the ladder of significance. Here is my story:

When I graduated from college, I landed my dream job. My husband and I decided that we would wait to have children until I was fairly well established in my career. During this time, we bought our first home, drove new vehicles and vacationed in the Caribbean. We very much enjoyed the luxuries of dual income and no dependents.

I diligently pursued my career for 5 years, before we had our first baby girl. I stayed home with her for 2 months and then we put her in daycare. I resumed my career full force. When our oldest was 2 years old, we had our second baby girl. After having her, I stayed home 4 months. It was much more difficult to return to work this time. But once we were settled into a routine, we did adjust and my career resumed again.

Not too long after I returned to work, I attended Stephen Covey's class – First Things First. This class really challenged the participants to think about the priorities of their heart and take action to ensure that their life really reflected their priorities. It was at this time that I realized my life did not reflect the priorities of my heart. My husband and I decided that we would make the necessary changes so that I could work part time. It took us 18 months to have our finances in order and by then our daughters were 4 and 2 years old. But I did move into a part time status.

Within the company I worked for, part time work was permitted, but not always looked upon favorably and there was a certain stigma that went with working part time. With the move to part time status, I took my first step down the ladder of success.

After I started working part time, I opened a pre-school in our church. Our oldest daughter attended this pre-school. It was an awesome experience. This was my first step up the ladder of significance.

As our girls entered elementary school, I began volunteering to help there. One particular little boy captured my heart. He had been born addicted to heroine and didn't have the best home life. I tried to give him some special attention when I was in the kindergarten classroom helping. One day, he looked up at me and said – “Mrs. White, could you just hold me?” Another step up the ladder of significance.

Another day I was at the elementary school to watch my oldest daughter in an event. I overheard a friend say to her, “You're so lucky, your mom comes to everything.” Another step up the ladder of significance.

When our daughters were 9 and 7, we had a surprise ending – having our 3rd baby girl. I continued to work part time and by this time I had worked my way up to a Senior Analyst level. However, I worked rather unusual hours which made it difficult to get a full night's sleep. But we pressed on, certain that we needed my income as I was the primary breadwinner.

When our youngest daughter was 2 years old, God called me to home-school our older 2 daughters. It was such a challenge for me to continue to work early morning hours and then home school the remainder of the day. My husband and I began to pray for a financial breakthrough that would allow me to quit work. By this time I'd been at my job 17+ years, had great benefits, and made a great salary, even in a part time status. We prayed for nearly a year with no change. Then a friend gave me a Bible Study on Faith. This study pointed out that if we wait until we see things in the natural before we'll make a move, that's not faith. Faith is taking the step even when you can't see how things are going to work out. I shared this with my husband and we agreed to change our prayers. We began praying for the date that I should quit my job. Within a few weeks, we both had received an answer independently. And the surprising thing was, we both received the same answer! However, it was still 6 months away.

That was 8 months ago. After 18 ½ years in my career, and doing very well in it, I took the final step down the ladder of success. I resigned from my job and have devoted myself fully to my family. We will begin our home-school year in 4 days. I am more prepared than I've ever been and so excited about the coming school year.

But as I've watched our kids, they like the material things just as any other child, but more than that they want our time and attention. I'm thankful God helped me to get my priorities straight while I still had time to make the changes. We've made some sacrifices - we continue to drive even older vehicles and our vacations are now long weekends away. My family jokingly calls me the 'Goodwill Queen' – I do a lot of shopping there these days. But, I recently asked all 3 girls if they'd rather me go back to work....they all said NO! And their primary reason is that I'm not too tired to do things with them now. Another step up the ladder of significance.